

Comment on the sGEIS for the Dec. 1, 2011 public hearing

Ithaca, NY

We in New York have the benefit of learning from Pennsylvania's mistakes. The DEC has not been diligent in looking into problems caused by the hydro-fracking industry in PA. These include air pollution from heavy trucking, radioactivity released into water, gas explosions, spills, and aquifer contamination. Basically the DEC has minimized these problems in the sGEIS rather than taking the time to investigate themselves. This has resulted in an overly simplistic view of mitigation of any problems.

Here in the Finger Lakes we have precious resources that will appreciate in the coming years. We have large repositories of potable water in the lakes and we have good farmland especially suited to growing grapes and other specialty crops. We also have a strong tourism and educational industry that is fueled by the natural beauty of the area. These long term resources will be impacted negatively by the heavy industrial activity that comes with hydro-fracking. The jobs that are created will be short term, leaving an damaged landscape behind that will not attract tourists, wineries, or other economic activity. Opening this area to the destructive boom and bust cycle of hydro-fracking will leave our children with the bust. In the New York times article of June 25, 2011 "Insiders Sound an Alarm Amid Natural Gas Rush" by Ian Urbina, geologists and industry analysts have stated that the productivity of these fracked wells all comes within the first few years which means that they must be fracked much more frequently than previously thought. This information calls into question the DEC's projections of air pollution and trucking based on old productivity information.

The effect of hydro-fracking on agriculture has been given little attention since the draft sGEIS. Unfortunately, the DEC has lumped various types of farms together and given little attention to the specialty farms that we have here in the Finger Lakes. In the first place, the setbacks from buildings proposed are ridiculously small given the heavy industrial nature of hydro-fracking. Pipeline placement is also problematic for these farms because portions of their land can be cut off from the remainder. Vineyards derive much of their income from associated restaurants and tasting rooms that are reliant on a beautiful landscape that would be horribly transformed by drilling. Vineyard visitors would also be driven away by the incredible traffic associated with hydro-fracking. In addition, many of the organic farms in the area could no longer sell their produce at the high prices they now command because organic consumers are notoriously sensitive to pollutants and pollutants previously unknown in this area will be introduced by hydro-fracking. In effect, the DEC sGEIS does not make hydro-fracking safe for specialty agriculture.

In conclusion, the sGEIS has not taken into account more recent information on the perils of hydro-fracking based upon the Pennsylvania experience. The sGEIS also oversimplifies the effect on agriculture and minimizes the huge long term negative socio-economic impacts for the Finger Lakes.

Sincerely yours,

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